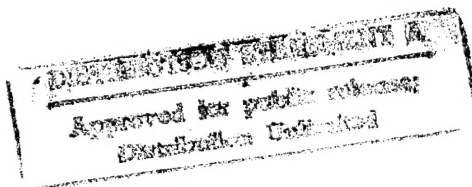


**MAKING DO WITH LESS,  
OR COPING WITH UPTON'S GHOST**

**Eliot A. Cohen**

**May 26, 1995**



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## FOREWORD

Every April the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute hosts its Annual Strategy Conference. This year's theme, "Strategy During the Lean Years: Learning From the Past and the Present," brought together scholars, serving and retired military officers, and civilian defense officials from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom to discuss strategy formulation in time of penury from Tacitus to Force XII.

In this time of declining defense budgets, the Army and the other services are coping with the dual challenges of downsizing while remaining the world's foremost military. Today, the armed forces are 35 percent smaller than they were only five years ago. Amid the uncertainty of the build-down, the Army faces what is both a challenge and an opportunity: how to make the very fine Army which won a decisive victory in Desert Storm even better while it changes its size and structure.

In this paper, Professor Eliot A. Cohen of Johns Hopkins University urges the Army to draw on lessons from its own history. More than one generation of American military professionals have inherited and perpetuated Civil War Major General Emory Upton's distrust of—and disdain for—civilians in general and politically elected or appointed civilian leaders in particular. As Professor Cohen indicates, the uncertainties of downsizing and reorganization coincide with the need to accommodate new technologies that could help the Army cope with the diverse threats that are part of what is still a very dangerous world. He cautions that in coping with this enormous challenge, the Army must be careful not to engage in the kind of introspection that may foster an institutionalized isolation from the nation it is sworn to defend.

Professor Cohen suggests there are ways to keep America's Army truly the Army of the nation and its people. The way soldiers and leaders are recruited, trained, educated, and promoted must, he asserts, change to bring more and not less civilian influence into the Army. Professor Cohen urges the Army to go forward into Force XXI and to do so with both enhanced technologies and with an enhanced understanding of who and what it serves: the American people and the defense of their Constitution.

The future is uncertain, and we will be better prepared to meet the challenges of that future if we are willing to engage ideas in an open and informed debate. To that end, the Strategic Studies Institute offers Dr. Cohen's perspective for your consideration.

WILLIAM W. ALLEN  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Acting Director,  
Strategic Studies Institute

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

ELIOT A. COHEN is Professor of Strategic Studies at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. The author of many articles on strategy and military affairs, he directed the *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, the U.S. Air Force's multivolume study of the Gulf War of 1991. He is a consultant to government agencies and private corporations and served as a military intelligence officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.

## **MAKING DO WITH LESS, OR COPING WITH UPTON'S GHOST**

### **Strategy at a Time of Flux.**

In November 1994 the United States witnessed an upheaval in its political system as the Republican Party regained control of both houses of Congress for the first time in four decades. This eruption within our own political system was largely unanticipated. It is an American parallel to the shaking of political systems across the world in countries as different as Japan and Italy. It is, of course, but a faint echo of the far greater tumult that accompanied what may be the greatest political event of our time—the collapse of the Warsaw Pact—and then of the Soviet Union itself. Accompanying this political revolution has been the no less profound transformation of the global economy brought about by the information technologies. The silicon chips in a modern car take up a greater part of its cost than the steel, and the ubiquitous computer terminal has transformed corporations, finance, and the very structure of business life. New centers of world economic power are emerging, particularly China which may, in our life time, surpass the United States in the size of its economy. These political and economic transformations are interlinked and may be only the beginning of larger convulsions. Some observers have pointed to a world in which changes in biotechnology could pose profound challenges to the core assumptions of our political system, namely that men (and women) are indeed born equal. The rise of China and the emergence of the successful economies of Asia have already begun to change the constellation of world politics.

It would be altogether astounding, in view of these vast changes, if American strategy, including the very shape of the armed forces, their means of recruitment, and even their modes of fighting, were not to change and change radically. The spreading notion of a revolution in military affairs, which helps characterize the new defense environment, is useful. But it is no less important to understand the legacies of America's military past than to attempt to peer into our future. Military organizations, more than most, carry the burdens of their past with them. This monograph deals with the Army's interpretation of its past and the lessons that soldiers may derive from it for the future. The initial title of my paper—"Making Do With Less"—is, perhaps, misplaced. The American military will indeed find itself with less, but it will not be "making do"—it will be doing different. Yet that title is useful, I think, in highlighting the way we think about defense in this strange new era. Until recently the American defense establishment has defined the defense drawdown as just that—a drawdown, or demobilization—rather than a reshaping to meet new challenges.

That demobilization has been extraordinarily successful. The military has shed approximately 35 percent of its end strength in the last 5 years, doing so without crippling itself in the process, or breaking faith with the vast majority of its members. Few other institutions in the private or the public sector could have handled so large a shrinkage so effectively. Demobilization is a perfectly normal and desirable event after

a war, even a Cold War. What made this demobilization more painful than most was the fact of an all-volunteer military which, unlike earlier generations of draftees, was not particularly eager to change out of khaki (or, today, camouflage). This demobilization also, however, has brought to the fore anxieties which are deeply rooted in the American military's, and in particular the Army's, collective cycle. These anxieties appear most clearly in what one might call the doctrine of the "cycle," a stylized view of American military history captured by American official historians writing shortly after the end of World War II. One of them described a cycle of American military history as follows:

- (1) prior to the war, insufficient military expenditures, based on the public's prewar conviction that war could not come to America; (2) discovery that war *could* come after all; (3) a belated rush for arms, men, ships, and planes to overcome the nation's demonstrated military weakness; (4) advance of the producing and training program, attended by misunderstandings, delays, and costly outlay, but gradual creation of a large and powerful army; (5) mounting successes in the field, and eventual victory; (6) immediately thereafter, rapid demobilization and dissolution of the Army as a powerful fighting force; (7) sharp reduction of appropriations sought by the military establishment, dictated by concern over its high cost and for a time by the revived hope that, again, war would not come to America.<sup>2</sup>

Politicians and pundits, as well as historians and soldiers, often fall back on this depiction of American military history. Thus, the Bush administration's Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, said, "historically we've always gotten it wrong. We've never done it right. You can't find a time in this century when we've been through one of these cycles where we did, in fact, take the force down in an intelligent fashion."<sup>3</sup> Or, commented veteran defense journalist Richard Halloran, "Three times in this century, the U.S. has demobilized after winning a war. Twice that caused Americans to pay a dear price in blood and treasure."<sup>4</sup> The doctrine of the cycle is deeply ingrained in American military history; it is a theme that goes back to the first comprehensive statements of that history in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So it is not terribly surprising that it is heard again. It is a diagnosis at once disheartening and comforting—disheartening because those who make it expect an inevitable failure on the part of the American body politic to do what's right; comforting because bearing, as this indictment does, the weight of history, it removes responsibility from defense establishment leaders to do more than plead for additional resources. And should they fail, this version of history offers at least the solace of martyrdom.

Defense planners do, however, have a responsibility to make sure that they have the history right, and it is a far more complicated history than one might think. At a broad level, the demobilizations from the great wars of American history were far less ruinous to American policy than has been made out. That which followed the Revolution hardly counts, since the Constitution did not come into force until well after the war. Following the War of 1812, the United States maintained a small but respectable Navy and an Army adequate for its fundamental strategic purposes on the frontier. The same may be

said after the Mexican-American War. The post-Civil War demobilization produced armed forces that were, again, more than adequate for their strategic tasks in the succeeding decades, where the Spanish-American War led to important increases in the size of the armed forces and improvements in their professional education. Even the demobilization after World War I still produced a much larger military than that which had existed before the war. The Army of 1915, for example, had some 107,000 men; the Army of 1925, 137,000 (the Navy and Marine Corps, interestingly, had experienced even more growth). The demobilization after World War II does indeed fit the stereotype of precipitate shrinkage of the military that we so often hear about, although here, too, the statistics are instructive: the 554,000-man Army of 1948 was almost exactly three times the size of the 185,000-man Army of 1938. After Korea the military receded relatively little because of the Cold War. The post-Vietnam demobilization was, in some ways, a painful success, marked as it was by the long transformation of the American military into an all-volunteer force.

This thumbnail sketch conceals important service differences. For the Air Force, this century's demobilizations have been, on the whole, positive experiences. The World War II demobilization coincided with the birth pangs of its emergence as an independent service; and the Korean demobilization with the expansion of its role in nuclear warfare. Vietnam brought neither of these obvious institutional benefits, but the period of the Vietnam demobilization coincided with the acquisition of that generation of aircraft—F-15 and F-16—that gave the USAF international superiority for decades. The Marine Corps' 20th century demobilizations all meant a return not only to smaller sizes (which the Marines have generally preferred) but to an all-volunteer elite corps. In addition, the campaigns of the two World Wars and Korea contributed to the public reputation of a Corps that has long feared absorption by its far larger and more powerful rival, the Army. Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and the Inchon landing all helped ensure the survival of the Marines in an era of peace.

For the Navy too, the institutional legacies of demobilization have been far from uniformly negative. Its coastal and riverine efforts during the Civil War seemed unnatural in retrospect, and it inflicted little pain on America's sailors to return to their pre-1860 missions of patrol and showing the flag. The World War I demobilization coincided with a period of technological experimentation (particularly in naval aviation) and the formal establishment of the U.S. Navy as the peer of its rival, the Royal Navy. Adoption of the "Navy second to none" standard in 1916 and the Washington Naval Treaty standards after the war were compensation for a shrinkage in the size of the wartime Navy. The World War II demobilization was far more challenging, coming as it did after the Navy's greatest operational successes. But after Korea the Navy's role was enhanced by its performance in limited warfare, and its institutional possibilities—threatened before the war by the U.S. Air Force—grew steadily. As for Vietnam, the war had less of an impact on an organization that was less involved than any of its sister services. In the 1970s it demobilized wisely, scrapping old ships at an accelerated rate to make way for a smaller but more modern fleet in the 1980s.



It is the Army which has suffered most during its experiences of demobilization. The post-Civil War Army meant for many officers a reversion to permanent ranks four or five levels below the brevet ranks they had held during that struggle—from corps down to battalion or even company command. For the next several decades these officers would find themselves engaged in the drudgery of Western duty, bound by excruciatingly slow promotion rates. The World War I demobilization came about before the Army had fully proved itself on the battlefields of Europe and almost immediately entailed a struggle with the nascent Air Force desirous of independence. The National Defense Act of 1920 promised a far larger army than the nation was willing to support, and the technical advances of the Army—particularly in the area of armored warfare—soon lapsed. In the Army's collective mind, the World War II demobilization is closely linked with the debacle of Korea, although there is room to ask whether the calamities of Task Force Smith were merely the product of overly rapid demobilization rather than poor leadership in the postwar Army. The Korean demobilization, like those which preceded it, was accompanied by a deep uncertainty about the Army's mission. After 1953 that uncertainty led the Army down the blind alley known as the Pentomic Division—an attempt to make the Army work on a battlefield dominated by tactical nuclear weapons. And, finally, after Vietnam the Army bore the brunt of the transition to the all-volunteer crisis, including the quality crisis of the late 1970's.

The post-Cold War demobilization has been particularly difficult for the Army not only because of the leadership and management problems posed by letting go a quarter of a million soldiers. It has entailed the same kind of disorienting mission change that the Army has experienced before. During most of the Cold War, the Army defined itself by its ability to fight a very particular kind of war (intense, mechanized battles), at a particular place (on the plains of central Europe), and in a particular manner (as part of a well-defined, long-standing international alliance). That core mission, and with it a way of life, has disappeared for good. There is, moreover, a certain poignancy in the Army's self-evaluation as an institution that made the long and difficult trek from Hamburger Hill to 73 Easting. It fears, naturally enough, that it will lose the painful gains that it won during the two decades from Vietnam to Desert Storm.

### **The Uptonian Hunker.**

The Army has reacted to demobilization in many ways, some of which are no longer, unfortunately, central to the Army's understanding of itself—one thinks, for example, of John McAuley Palmer, one of this country's most original military thinkers and a passionate advocate of the citizen-soldier concept. Certainly one reaction is what one might call the Uptonian Hunker, after Emory Upton (1839-81). Upton had a brilliant and tragic career. Graduating West Point in 1861, he began service in the Union Army as a second lieutenant and ended up as a brevet major general. His exploits during the Civil War included leading a division-sized task force against the Confederate line at the Bloody Angle in May 1864. After the war he served as the Superintendent of West Point and commandant of the artillery school at Fort Monroe, after performing various special



services for General William Tecumseh Sherman as an observer of overseas militaries. His career ended tragically with his suicide in 1881. His most important legacy, however, was a work, *The Military Policy of the United States*, published after his death by Secretary of War Elihu Root in 1904.

Upton was one of the great tactical reformers of the United States Army, one of the first officers to find ways of coping with the revolutionary change brought about by the minie ball and mass-produced rifle. He helped pioneer the three battalion regiment, and in some of his work we find him sketching out that fundamental formation that we now know as the infantry squad. Indeed, his manual is often referred to as the first *tactical* (as opposed to *drill*) manual of the United States Army.<sup>5</sup> Upton's reaction to the experiences of the Civil War did not, however, end with tactical reform, although they may have begun there. This was so because Upton interpreted the harsh and bloody experience of the Civil War not simply as the product of a technological revolution in war, nor as a reflection on the inadequate preparation of commanders and staffs for their tasks, but as an indictment of the relationship between the United States and its Army.<sup>6</sup>

In some ways the most important part of Upton's reaction to the Civil War consisted of an indictment of the American politico-military system, a critique based on three harsh contentions. First, Upton believed that the history of American military policy was a history of the irresponsibility of legislative authority and of feckless democratic neglect of the armed forces. Second, he believed that the basis of civil-military relations in the United States consisted of irrational antimilitary prejudice. Third, he contended that the military routinely suffered throughout American history from enormous and unnecessary losses because of civilian interference in—we might call it “micromanagement”—of military operations.

The upshot of this diagnosis is a syndrome that one might call The Uptonian Hunker, an institutional response to one reading of American history. It is a legacy of turning inward; cultivating professional skills while expecting the worst from a society that does not understand the military and quietly nursing a grudge against politicians who misuse soldiers and then abuse them for failing to deliver as required. Upton believed that even moderate but adequate financial outlays for the military in peace would have eliminated the need for the prolonged contest of the Civil War. Uptonians generally agreed with Lord Garnet Wolseley's assertion about the Civil War that “from first to last, the co-operation of even one army corps (35,000 men) of regular troops would have given complete victory to whichever side it fought on.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Upton himself said as much: “Twenty thousand regular troops at Bull Run would have routed the insurgents, settled the question of military resistance, and relieved us from the pain and suspense of four years of war.”<sup>8</sup> But Upton and his colleagues assumed, with some bitterness, that the politicians would never provide them with the resources in peace to prepare adequately for war.

The Uptonian response to the fecklessness of democracies in peace had several components. One, as exemplified by Upton's own career, was a renewed dedication to tactical training and improvement of military organization at the lower levels.

Professional military education in the narrowest sense benefits from The Uptonian Hunker, and, indeed, it is no accident that Upton spent a good deal of his post-Civil War career at military educational institutions. Another reaction, less healthy perhaps, was an obsession with quantity, with the overall size of the armed forces, not simply in end strength but in terms of large-scale organizations or force structure. Upton argued strongly for a skeletal system of organization, whereby understrength units in peacetime would be raised to wartime strength through the incorporation of volunteers or draftees. The cumbersome army of 1939, composed of nine infantry divisions, a cavalry division and assorted supporting units, none of which were close to being fully manned, is a good example of Uptonian organization.

The Uptonian Hunker reflected a deep mistrust, not only of politicians' willingness to fund the armed forces, but of their desire to control it. This suspicion was embodied in the decision of Upton's patron, William Tecumseh Sherman, to move the headquarters of the Commanding General to St. Louis and away from Washington. This move, justified to some extent by a desire to be closer to the Army's center of gravity in the West, reflected as well a profound mistrust of politics and politicians. Again, a quotation from Lord Wolseley's introduction to G. F. R. Henderson's study of Stonewall Jackson sums up a prevalent professional attitude to civilian control:

. . . to hand over to civilians the administration and organisation of the army, whether in peace or in war, or to allow them to interfere in the selection of officers for command, or promotion, is most injurious to efficiency; while during war, to allow them, no matter how high their political capacity, to dictate to commanders in the field any line of conduct, after the army has once received its commission, is simply to ensure disaster.<sup>9</sup>

In his pathbreaking work, *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel Huntington suggested that this grim inward-looking response was a healthy one.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, since Huntington wrote in the late 1950s, it has become a kind of conventional wisdom that a bit of mutual mistrust between politicians and soldiers is not a bad thing for military professionalism. An austere dedication to the military craft results, Huntington argued, and that serves the broader good.

The reflexes leading to the Uptonian Hunker have not completely disappeared, although they by no means take the forms seen in the 19th century. Nor is it clear that the Uptonian Hunker was the sole or even in some cases the dominant response to the Army's demobilizations, including the current one. But there are at least four areas where it appears in some fashion and where critical reflection may lead us to question its merit.

#### *Doctrine.*

Writing shortly after the Gulf War, Stephen Rosenfeld of *The Washington Post* wrote an article praising the role played by doctrine in the Gulf War. He contended that:

What the military appears to like most about military doctrine is that it's military. It's not something drafted by 'intellectual theoreticians' and imposed by politicians for political purposes, such as applying pressure to force a compromise solution, as in Vietnam. It's designed by military people for the unambiguously military purpose of fighting and winning a war . . .<sup>11</sup>

Insofar as the Army reacted to the Vietnam demobilization with an Uptonian Hunker, it was in part through an invigoration of its doctrinal core. Particularly through its capstone operations manual, *FM 100-5*, the Army redefined itself, first in 1976 through a renewed focus on armored warfare in Europe, and in 1982 with the advent of Air Land Battle. *FM 100-5*, however, was a reflection of much larger developments, including the rise of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), issuance of an increasingly elaborate array of training manuals and guides, and the creation of a training regime which drummed into units the importance of adhering to doctrine. By the end of the Cold War, the Army's self-image had become inextricably linked with its self-definition as a "doctrinal army."<sup>12</sup> The other services followed in the Army's path, although occasionally in the spirit of Admiral King's (possibly apocryphal) remark, "I don't know exactly what you mean by logistics, but I want more of it." The Marine Corps drafted its own manuals, a small group within the Air Force eventually produced *Basic Aerospace Doctrine* in 1992, and the Navy—historically the most anti-doctrinal of all services—even created a Naval Doctrine Command. By the early 1990s the first efforts had begun to produce joint doctrine as well.

The benefits of doctrine for the Army were enormous. It unified a service that was susceptible to fragmentation along branch lines; in Air Land Battle, in particular, engineers, communications experts, artillerymen, tankers, and infantrymen could all find a common language. It gave the Army a coherent procurement program, as the Army went the furthest of all services (except, perhaps, the much smaller Marine Corps) in tailoring its acquisition system to the requirements of its way of war. And, above all, it restored cohesion and improved morale in a service deeply demoralized by the Vietnam war. Indeed, the advent of doctrine is an important part of the story of the reprofessionalization of the U.S. Army following that debilitating conflict. In this way, the Army's discovery of doctrine was a recognizably Uptonian response to its calamities in Indochina.

Will an absorption in doctrine serve the Army so well in the future? One must wonder. There is a certain rigidity, or formulaic quality, that inheres in all doctrine however much one speaks of it as merely "an authoritative guide to action." Inevitably, perhaps, words such as "synchronization" tend to become icons, and the test of doctrinal purity can become a damper on iconoclastic spirits. This was the fate that surely befell Soviet doctrine in the Cold War and French doctrine before World War II. The coherence and comprehensiveness of the Soviet view of war were in many ways an inspiration to the Army's early manual writers, but it is well to remember the drawbacks as well as the benefits of Soviet-style coherence. It is not a long step from coherence to orthodoxy and from orthodoxy to ossification. Doctrine can appeal to the dogmatic

temperament, as evidenced by a letter to the *Joint Force Quarterly* in which the dean of the Armed Forces Staff College denounced a writer for violating the current orthodoxy of "jointness":

[Professor Stephen P.] Rosen mistakenly promotes redundancy by suggesting that *creative competition* is healthy amongst the services and then appeals to good and bad interservice rivalry to make his case. This is exactly the kind of debilitating thinking we ought to be eradicating, not advocating, in the pages of *Joint Force Quarterly*.<sup>13</sup>

When the leaders of military academies say that they favor *eradicating* certain kinds of thinking, one knows doctrinal purity has gone much too far.

Moreover, the advent of doctrine meant not just the development of ideas but of institutions, and with it an increasingly bureaucratic structure for writing and approving new field manuals. This is not surprising: As doctrine increases in importance, so, too, does the care with which it will be written and the stakes senior officers see in shaping it. This bureaucratization of doctrine was reasonably well-suited to the demands of the Cold War because the identity of the opponent and his modes of fighting did not change a great deal over time. In a considerably more complicated and ambiguous world, this is not likely to be the case. Finally, doctrine, a response to the external environment, can end up coloring an institution's perception of it. The Army defined its performance in the Gulf War as an execution of Air Land Battle doctrine, when a reasonable observer might well conclude that ground operations only indirectly resembled the kinds of war anticipated in the then current version of *Field Manual 100-5*, which focused primarily on warfare with the Soviet Union in central Europe. It should be noted that some officers in the Air Force made a similar error in claiming that war validated the views of long-dead theorists of aerial bombardment from before World War II. In both cases, a desire to understand the present through intellectual lenses formed years before were potential sources of misinterpretation of events.

The Army's discovery of doctrine was a classically Uptonian response to the Vietnam experience, and no one would suggest that it sweep away the useful legacies of *FM 100-5* and its sister manuals. It might be well, however, for the Army to modify its faith in doctrine in an environment that is far more fluid and uncertain than that of the late Cold War. Starting with the German general Wilhelm Balck's contention—"Regulations are for the purpose of creating independent thought"—might not be a bad way to begin.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Personnel.*

The Army's current officer personnel system—indeed, with some variation, that of all the services—is very much a product of the Cold War. It is characterized by an up or out system of promotion, in which officers enter at the bottom of the pyramid and are gradually weeded out, with very few opportunities for leveling out at a company or low

field grade level. It is a system characterized—particularly for officers who wish to become generals—by fairly short tours of several years in different assignments, and by “ticket punching,” that is, by the necessity of having certain critical educational and, above all, command experiences at different levels in one’s career. It is, in short, a personnel system well-suited to a mobilization army, designed to produce well-rounded generalists for a mass force that would expand even further in peacetime.

From time to time the Army has noted the adverse consequences of this system, for example, the aridity and artificiality of its officer evaluations, which employ a stilted and often arcane language (in which anything but superlatives stand out as a black mark), and which are infinitely less informative than similar documents from the turn of the century. More importantly, it is the kind of personnel system that virtually precludes the kind of odd careers that may be conducive to military innovation in the 21st century. Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, the great Chief of Staff of the Prussian and later the German armies in the 19th century, never commanded a unit larger than a company and yet headed his army for several decades. By virtue of his experience on the board of a major railroad, he learned far more than many of his contemporaries about one of the most important technologies for the conduct of war in the 19th century. It is virtually unthinkable that he could have had that kind of career in the U.S. Army today. Nor, for that matter, is it all that easy to imagine a career like that of General Leonard Wood, who began his military service as a doctor at age 25, and ended up as Chief of Staff.

The Army of the future may wish to cultivate a greater percentage of its officer corps who pursue odd career tracks—perhaps by spending half of their careers working in biotechnology firms or serving in the still highly secret National Reconnaissance Office. The promotion and personnel system would require drastic overhaul to permit, let alone encourage, such career paths. And there are even more radical possibilities that should be considered. Consider the career of Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, whose exploits as commander of the 20th Maine at Gettysburg take up five pages of the Army’s leadership manual.<sup>15</sup> There is no room for a Chamberlain in the contemporary Army—perhaps there should not be. But the Army almost surely suffers from an inability to contemplate lateral entry by talented civilians at levels high enough to be attractive to successful executives or professionals. Almost all other large organizations, with the exceptions of well-established religions, routinely bring in at least a small percentage of executives from the outside as a way of bringing special talents and fresh perspectives to bear on enduring problems. Why not the military as well?

Such a notion is distinctly un-Uptonian. Indeed, Upton heaped scorn on the civilians (particularly politicians) turned generals in the Civil War—although some of them, in fact, performed rather well.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, in times of severe crisis (during the World Wars) the Army has commissioned some civilians at a senior level, although almost never for combat commands. But since 1945 it has been almost unheard of for civilians to enter the Army as officers except in select professions (mainly law and medicine) and even then usually at a fairly junior rank. Nor have the services ever taken kindly to the idea of general officers (in particular) switching services.

All of these personnel practices made sense in an age of military specialization; they had their analogues in the business world as well. Indeed, in a classic study of the mid-20th century large American corporation, Peter Drucker shrewdly pointed out the similarity of the problems of leadership development confronted by the military and corporations.<sup>17</sup> But in a world in which IBM can import a chief executive officer from the outside, perhaps the military should contemplate doing the same.<sup>18</sup> At the very least, the military may wish to consider unusual career paths, not all that different from those that characterized some of the Civil War generals; that is, 5-10 years of service followed by an extended period of civilian life, with the possibility of returning for short periods of time (1-5 years, say) at a much higher rank. Normally, this kind of pattern can only occur in unusual cases or for reservists who have remained part of organized units. But surely it is conceivable that in the future the military could take advantage of executives who, at age 45 or 50, wish to devote a number of years to public service in the armed forces.

If the Uptonians gazed with suspicion at all but purely professional military officers, they have had no less scorn for the National Guard and Reserves. Loathing the reserves for their political clout and military inefficiency and particularly fearing the introduction of officers not socialized into the professional military life, the Uptonians have sought different or occasionally contradictory ways of controlling the National Guard—by marginalizing them (through use of an expansible army concept) or by dominating them as the case might be. After Vietnam a further complication was introduced as the Army self-consciously bound itself to the Reserves by expanding the force structure and incorporating Reserve units into it. The reason for this change had nothing to do with changed attitudes regarding the effectiveness of reservists, but rather with a desire to tie the Army closely to the body politic, and to prevent a large-scale use of the Army without a mobilization of American public opinion for war. The advent of the all-volunteer military in the early 1970s reinforced the Army's need, in particular, for a link hitherto maintained by the draft, while the cost of the all-volunteer force meant that a sharp reduction in the size of the standing force was inevitable. The contradictions of the Total Force concept became clear in the Gulf crisis and war of 1990-91. After years of declaring that such prime units as the 24th Mechanized Division would not go to war without their "roundout" brigade from the National Guard, it became apparent that the Army had no confidence in the fighting quality of reserve units. Although many Guard and Reserve units served admirably in support functions (and, in the case of the Marines and the Air Force, it should be noted in combat as well), they were excluded from fighting missions.

Desert Storm suggested that the regular forces' suspicion of Reserve and National Guard units had not abated. The time may be ripe, however, for the Army to re-think the purpose of its relationship with the reserves. In particular, the Army might reevaluate the utility of the reserves, including the Reserve Officer Training Corps program, as a way of retaining the tie with American society that it justly values, but in a different way than in the past. Where the Total Force concept used reservists as hostages, in effect, for the commitment of the American people to a war, a different concept might consider



reserve enlistments and programs, including ROTC, as a way of keeping American elites—commercial, political, and nonprofit—in touch with the American military. Rather than maintaining reserve programs on the basis of criteria of military efficiency narrowly defined, or even simple geographic distribution, the Army should consider targeting reserve duty demographically. This may mean, for instance, developing enlistment programs that fit with civilian careers, even if they are not optimal from the point of view of military service. One possibility might be a year of active duty after high school followed by a 3- or 4-summer (but not monthly) commitment to reserve training, paid for with college tuition benefits rather than salary. Similar post-college arrangements might be attractive to some young men and women.

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### *Education.*

Part of the Uptonian reaction to the Civil War experience was a focus on professional military education, particularly at the level of middle-ranked officers. Upton's patron, General Sherman, founded the Leavenworth School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry in 1881, requiring lieutenants from each infantry and cavalry regiment to attend its 2-year course. Today, it is fair to say, the military devotes more effort and attention to training and education (two different activities) than any civilian organization with the exception of schools themselves.

It is a cliché, but nonetheless true, that a period of demobilization is an optimal time for schooling—for introspection on the military art and cultivation of new means of warfare through academic study. That being the case, the time is ripe for rethinking the educational structure that emerged from the Cold War, starting at the top with the war colleges. By the end of the Cold War, the United States had no fewer than six war colleges, up from the original two at the turn of the century—one for each of the services, the National War College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. These institutions had undergone a period of mild reform in the late 1980s which generally centered on the introduction of grading and an upgrading of the faculty. In their outlines, however, the war colleges have not changed very much. Their populations have oddly remained the same size or even grown, despite the shrinkage of the armed forces. Thus, even as the Army has come down in size from 780,000 in 1985 to 510,000 in 1995, the student population of the Army War College has grown to 288 in 1993 and 321 in 1995.<sup>19</sup> The war colleges have the same composition as in the past, their curricula continue to focus on higher level political and strategic issues. The war colleges are no longer simply places to go for a year's break from the exhausting routine of a military career. Their form, however, remains that of the early Cold War: institutions designed to provide an overlay of strategic education for a large number of senior officers, many but not all of whom will go on to general officer rank. One could, in theory, imagine very different functions for the war colleges: centers for refining new operational concepts by study, gaming and practice (as was the Naval War College in the interwar period), training grounds for an elite corps of planners and joint warfare specialists, or much broader institutions designed to educate not simply officers but civilians as well in the higher conduct of war.



There may be a case for consolidating our war colleges into three—a Navy/Marine Corps, Army/Air Force, and National/ ICAF, for example—and attempting to create the kind of competition for quality that occurs in higher civilian education. The war colleges almost surely should become smaller in the new international environment, and although there may be something to be said for continuing service sponsorship, they should all be essentially joint institutions. The systems of governance of the war colleges merit reexamination as well. The current custom of having a general officer—often, but not necessarily, with an educational background—in charge for no more than 3 or 4 years prevents them from having the kind of sustained leadership that great academic institutions require. This in turn raises another issue of personnel management: Perhaps the services should consider the development of military education as a secondary specialty, much like foreign area expertise in today's Army.

One of the most notable features of the post-Vietnam military educational system was the creation of advanced schools of military studies in the Army, the Air Force, and now the Marine Corps. These schools, which reach officers at the rank of captain and major after their 1-year command and general staff courses, first proved themselves in the Gulf where a select group of Army planners helped devise the successful assault on Kuwait. Here again, one wonders whether there is a case for the creation of competitive but joint institutions (divided, again, along Army/Air Force and a Navy/Marine lines). For the most part, however, the challenge will be to maintain the quality already established and to ensure that the military bureaucracies make the best use of these institutions.

If the newest parts of the military educational apparatus seem to require only modest cultivation, the future of the oldest parts, the service academies, requires a closer, and perhaps a harder, look. Even as the Army, for example, has shrunk by about 35 percent in the past decade, the production of graduates from West Point has actually increased, from some 986 second lieutenants in 1984 to 1,042 in 1994. Some 25 percent of the Army's incoming officers now derive their commissions from West Point.<sup>20</sup> An increasing percentage of officers will enter the service, not through civilian educational institutions, but through the service academies. The wisdom of such a policy remains to be seen, and it is sure to give rise in the future, as it has in the past, to charges of favoritism exerted by and for the products of these institutions. More importantly, it should give rise to questions about the merits of an officer corps that is dominated by young men and women shaped, in their most formative years, not by the jostle of American universities, but by the uniformity, high pressure, and corporate culture of military academies.

#### *Civil-Military Relations.*

The Uptonian Hunker presupposes chronic tension between civilians and soldiers. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that Upton's mentor, General Sherman, refused to shake hands with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, at the May 24, 1865, grand review of the armies after the Civil War. Upton himself believed that the fault for the Union's

setbacks and losses in the Civil War lay primarily with civilians, and in particular in their incurable tendencies to meddle with operational planning.

In seeking to trace all the great mistakes and blunders committed during the war, to defects of our military system, it is important to bear in mind the respective duties and responsibilities of soldiers and statesmen. The latter are responsible for the creation and organization of our resources, and, as in the case of the President, may further be responsible for their management or mismanagement. Soldiers, while they should suggest and be consulted on all the details of organization under our system, can alone be held responsible for the control and direction of our armies in the field.<sup>21</sup>

Many serving officers would agree. General Schwarzkopf's Chief of Staff in the Persian Gulf asserted that during the Gulf War his boss "was never second-guessed by civilians, and that's the way it ought to work,"<sup>22</sup> a statement that historians might dispute, but that is revealing nonetheless. The almost belligerent assertion of military autonomy in the conduct of operations has, in recent years and months, taken other forms. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been asked to assess the prospects of effective military action in Yugoslavia, for example, they have provided answers almost surely calculated to deter their civilian superiors from the employment of military force.<sup>23</sup>

More troubling yet have been signs of a shift in the balance between civilian and military influence in the Pentagon. Some of this has been attributed to the influence of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986; others believe that it has to do with the ineptitude and military inexperience of the Clinton administration. The roots of the phenomenon are surely complex, but they are evident nonetheless in a spate of incidents, all of which indicate a disruption of civil-military relations that could have disturbing consequences in the future.

- Item: The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff expresses his opposition to the administration's policy in Yugoslavia in a front page interview in *The New York Times*; he subsequently reiterates that opposition in a signed editorial.<sup>24</sup>

- Item: In a leaked memorandum, a senior military officer is quoted as establishing a policy of "demonstrating that we need more force structure to carry out our assigned roles and missions . . ." The officer is not called to account.<sup>25</sup>

Civil-Military disagreements and disputes of these and related kinds are, of course, not new. But in this century, at any rate, it would have been virtually unthinkable for them to be public. And when they did become public (as in the MacArthur controversy in Korea or the so-called "Revolt of the Admirals" previously mentioned), they frequently terminated in the unceremonious dismissal of senior officers or their resignation in disgrace.

The crisis in civil-military relations goes well beyond the particular problems of the Clinton administration. It reflects the growth in institutional power first of service and then of the joint staffs at the expense of civilian secretaries and later the Office of the Secretary of Defense's staff. It stems in part from the increasingly esoteric nature of military power, which is now difficult enough for soldiers, let alone civilians, to understand fully. It has surely been shaped by the psychological aftermath of Vietnam, after which the officer corps has silently (and sometimes openly) avowed never to fight a war it could not win or submit to obloquy and contempt for going off to fight the nation's wars. It has a great deal to do with the dramatic increase in the professional competence of the officer corps throughout the 1970s and 1980s, an improvement not compensated for by a strengthening of the institutions of civilian control in the executive branch of government.

The crisis in civil-military relations is, in large part, a breakdown in an understanding of roles. American society has come to accept the notion, for example, that retired general officers may properly endorse, *en bloc*, particular candidates for the Presidency; that men or women in uniform can serve in policy-making positions (as national security adviser, for example), and that it is proper for senior officers to speak up on controversial matters of foreign policy or even to identify themselves as members of one political party or the other.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, one suspects that vigorous civilian efforts to reshape the military's promotion system (or simply to act vigorously to mold the general officer corps) would be regarded as infringements on the military's autonomy.

It is imperative that the United States come to terms with this crisis. Upton's suspicion of—becoming, indeed, contempt for—civilian political leadership is unhealthy and dangerous. The nature of war, and not merely the fecklessness of politicians, mandates the appearance of “interference” in the conduct of military operations. Officers often hope that clear lines can be drawn between political and military spheres of competence: Such aspirations are, however, by their nature elusive. In the present circumstances, exotic military technology combines with the ambiguity of a new era of international politics to place new strains on civil-military relations. Now, and increasingly in the future, politicians will simply fail to understand what it is their militaries can and cannot do; they will find it difficult to establish a yardstick of professional competence. As the military shrinks, fewer and fewer civilians will have direct military experience upon which to fall back. The result is likely to be poor judgment on their part about when to defer—and even more important, when not to defer—to the opinions of their military subordinates.

This being the case, there is a great need to improve the military literacy, as it were, of American civilian leaders on the one hand, while engaging the military in some soul-searching about its relationship to the larger society. One promising idea might be the injection of civilians into the nation's war colleges, a practice common in other countries. Another is the acceptance by the military of the need to engage in various personnel practices—retaining short service enlistments, making special arrangements to

maintain reserve units, keeping ROTC detachments at various elite universities—that will ensure a reasonably broad knowledge of military affairs among American elites. Beyond this, the military should consider more formal programs of military education aimed at those in a position of responsibility, or likely to assume such positions. Two- or three-week seminars and experience in the field, year-long part-time sessions, innovative uses of educational technology including computer-aided instruction— all could help make the military less of a *terra incognita* to those who can, and should, shape military policy.

Emory Upton is a tragic figure in American military history and not simply because of the manner in which his life ended. He emerged from the bloody experiences of the Civil War horrified at the waste of human life that he had seen; he attributed that horror to folly and incompetence rather than the more complex causes that a later generation can now see in that struggle. Like many professional officers before and since, he regarded politics and politicians with disdain and hoped to isolate their activities from his. Yet, if the American military experience suggests anything, it is the impossibility of so doing.

The American military, and particularly the Army, must look to other figures in its past to guide itself in establishing a proper relationship to society and government. The time is ripe for a period of introspection, not only about the art of war, which is undergoing profound changes, but about the most fundamental aspects of civil-military relations. Some of the impulse for this reflection must come from civilians, both within and outside government, but the military will need to do so as well. The current generation of soldiers bears responsibilities at a time of enormous transition in the armed services, and in military affairs more broadly: They can make sound decisions about the future, however, only if they come to terms with the past. Such a reckoning with their history requires that they first exorcise the troubled and persistent ghost of Major General Emory Upton.

## ENDNOTES

1. The first few paragraphs of this paper draw heavily on my article, "What To Do About National Defense," *Commentary*, Vol. 98, No. 5, November 1994, pp. 21-32.
2. Mark Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, Washington, DC: Historical Division, United States Army, 1950, p. 23.
3. Speech to Navy League, April 16, 1992.
4. Richard Halloran, "Eight Steps to a Better Military," *Baltimore Sun*, February 15, 1995, p. 13A.
5. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962, pp. 56-66.

6. See Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States*, 1904, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.

7. Quoted in G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, 1898, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949, p. 128.

8. Upton, *Military Policy*, p. xv. Of course, those 20,000 troops would no doubt have been as split as was the rest of the military, and as such would not have operated as a unified mass. Upton did not consider the consequences of the existence of such a large, loyal regular force on Union voluntary enlistments and the formation of new mass armies, or the possibility of a different style of southern resistance. In short, here was as unpolitical an assessment of the situation as one could imagine.

9. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson*, p. ix.

10. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

11. Stephen Rosenfeld, "Military Doctrine Today," *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1991, p. A25.

12. See, for example, Robert H. Scales, *et al.*, *Certain Victory : The United States Army in the Gulf War*, Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff, 1993, pp. 12-13.

13. Letter to the editor by Captain J. K. Pernini, USN, *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 3, Winter 1993/94, p. 100.

14. Wilhelm Balck, *Development of Tactics--World War*, Harry Bell, trans., Fort Leavenworth, KS: General Service Schools Press, 1922, p. 7.

15. "Military Leadership," *Field Manual 22-100*, Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1990, pp. 10-14.

16. For a very different view, see John A. Logan, *The Volunteer Soldier of America*, Chicago: R. S. Peale, 1887, a memoir/polemic by one of the better politicians turned generals in the Civil War.

17. See Peter F. Drucker, *The Concept of the Corporation*, 2d rev. ed., New York: New American Library, 1983, pp. 35-42.

18. In March 1993 IBM brought in Louis V. Gerstner, formerly of RJR Nabisco, to be its new chief executive officer.

19. Statistics from U.S. Army War College, Student Operations.

20. Statistics provided by U.S. Military Academy, West Point.
21. Upton, *Military Policy of the United States*, p. 305.
22. Bill Gertz, "Ex-commander in Somalia Hits Second Guessing," *Washington Times*, October 22, 1993, p A8.
23. See, for example, Rowan Scarborough, "Chiefs Sound Bosnia Alarm; Chaos Seen for U.S. Troops," *Washington Times*, August 12, 1992, p. A1.
24. Michael R. Gordon, "Powell Delivers a Resounding No on Using Limited Force in Bosnia," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1992, p. 1; Colin L. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," *The New York Times*, October 8, 1992, p. A35.
25. Michael R. Gordon, "Top Admiral Striving to Preserve Size of Fleet," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1994, p. 20.
26. There are a number of officers who are deeply concerned by this trend. See Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Taylor, "Leave Your Opinions at the Ballot Box," *Air Force Times*, January 30, 1995, p. 28; Colonel Charles Dunlap, "Welcome to the Junta: The Erosion of Civilian Control of the U.S. Military," *Wake Forest Law Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 341-392.

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